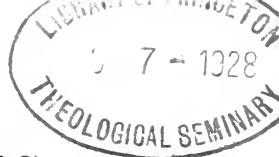


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THE
CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION.

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE REMONSTRANT PRESBYTERIAN MEETING-HOUSE,
YORK-STREET,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, 4TH JANUARY, 1852,

BY

DAVID MAGINNIS,

MINISTER OF THE CONGREGATION.

The Unity we seek is that of free vitality, of the Spirit, of independent men, brought together and kept together, not by a retrospective bond of sectarian opinion, but by oneness of spirit, and the prospective bond of a common aim and purpose.—*George Dawson.*

Let us have a Church for the whole man: truth for the mind; good works for the hands; love for the heart; and for the soul that aspiring after perfection, that unfaltering faith in God, which, like lightning in the clouds, shines brightest when elsewhere it is most dark.—*Theodore Parker.*

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BELFAST :
PRINTED FOR THE YORK-STREET REMONSTRANT CONGREGATION.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE REMONSTRANT CONGREGATION, YORK-STREET.

DEAR FRIENDS,—In grateful acknowledgment of the kindness and indulgence I have uniformly received from you, since first I came among you, but, especially, of the recent gratifying expression of your sympathy and confidence, I beg to inscribe to you the following Discourse, printed in compliance with your Request.

Hastily composed, "at the rate of Two in the Week," I intended to re-write it, treating the subject more fully and more systematically, so that it might be worthier of your acceptance ; but this design I was obliged to abandon as likely to end, if not in a treatise, in at least a new Discourse. I have consequently committed it to the press, with all its imperfections, as I delivered it, making only a few unimportant verbal alterations.

I have now only to express my sincere hope that as you so much approve of the sentiments embodied in these pages, you will continue to aid me in securing their fuller realization among us.

With best wishes for the truest welfare and happiness of you all,

Believe me, your sincere Friend,

Belfast, January, 1852.

D. McLENNAN.

THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION.

WE ARE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER.—Eph. iv. 25.

MAN to man is closely bound, and by many ties. We are drawn and held together by inward attraction and outward pressure. Our sympathies cement us. Even selfishness needs society for the attainment of its ends. Our interests, if not identical, are so interwoven as to be inseparable. And, even stronger than these, there is a bond of Nature's forming which connects men all together, and relaxes never. Its only condition is our existence. By coming into life, we become part of the great body of humanity. The Creator has constituted us "members one of another;" and no one can, even if he would, live wholly unto himself. Each one weaves a part, large or little, plain or showy, in the world's web. Each one contributes a share to the motley events which fill up the pages of time. Each one helps or hinders the world's prosperity, the world's well-being. Society is but the aggregate of its members, each, even the humblest, constituting a part; and the state, the character, of society, the sum of theirs. As are the parts so is the whole. Whence it follows that we are all responsible, each to the extent of his influence, for the condition of society. And when, in addition to this, it is considered how powerful is the reflex influence society exercises upon the individual,—clothing him with the web he helped to weave, teaching him the lessons he helped to write, imparting to him of the character he helped to form, it will be readily admitted that every human being has a deep interest in its welfare.

Very beautifully does Paul, in various parts of his writings, indicate the intimate relation which Christians sustain to each other, and the duties arising therefrom. They "are members one of another;" and all compose "but one body," "knit together" by "joints and bands,"—each having a place and function. And he who hath "set the members every one of them in the body," willeth that they "should have the same care one for another;" and that "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." As it is indispensable to the health and comfort of the human body that its members all enjoy health and comfort, not less essential to the well-being of the great social body is the well-being of all its members. In the human body, the slight-

est injury done to the feeblest or remotest member, is felt and resented : and the system cannot regain its natural equilibrium till the wound is healed, till the wrong is repaired ; and, when an injury is sustained in any member, and “ the other members ” neither sympathize with it, nor seem even to be conscious of its occurrence, the physician hesitates not to pronounce the whole system diseased. Not less truly may we affirm of the social body, that, when in a healthy state, it will feel deeply concerned for the welfare of its members ; will sympathize with the humblest in their sufferings, and will enjoy no real happiness nor peace till their sufferings cease, and health is restored ;—indifference or insensibility here, as really as in the human frame, arguing serious, radical disease of the whole system. In a healthy body, the members “ have the same care one for another ; ” and, if “ one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.”

These views, the doctrine of our text, we might apply in various ways. We might apply them to that vague and undefined, but highly important, personage, Society and her members, and consider their mutual relations and responsibilities. We might apply them to the State, and show its duty and interest to provide for the well-being of all its subjects, and their duty and interest to care for and defend each other ; to guard each other's rights, to redress each other's wrongs, and to promote each other's welfare. We might apply them to Nations, and show their mutual duties—their obligations to protect the wronged and oppressed, and to resist and repel the encroachments of tyranny and despotism. On none of these, however,—though inviting themes some of them, and of deep interest at the present hour,—do I now intend addressing you. I purpose, on the present occasion, to confine our attention to a much more limited, but by no means an unimportant, subject—the CONGREGATION. I wish to consider the Christian Congregation, in the light of our text : as a “ body ” composed of various “ members,” closely “ knit together,” and bound to exercise a kind “ care one for another.”

What is a Christian Congregation ? For what purposes formed ? What its bond of union ? What its objects, its responsibilities, its duties ? And how these may it best fulfil ?

A CONGREGATION IS A SOCIETY OF BRETHREN, VOLUNTARILY ASSOCIATED ON TERMS OF EQUALITY ; AND IS DESIGNED FOR THE MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT OF ITS MEMBERS, RELIGIOUSLY, MORALLY, MENTALLY AND SOCIALLY ; AND NOT OF ITS MEMBERS ONLY, BUT OF ALL WITHIN THE SPHERE OF ITS INFLUENCE. Such, in my mind, is the definition of a Christian Congregation.

It is a *voluntary* Association. Its members are not compelled, forced against their will, to enter it. We are at full liberty to join or not. No constraint should draw us together,—nor any influence save the conviction of duty. And when we feel convinced that it is our duty to enter a Christian Congregation, we should invariably connect ourselves with that in which are offered the most abundant means of usefulness,—opportunities of benefitting and being benefitted, and whose leading principles are most in accordance with our own views. I know that many persons allow their liberty in this respect to be in-

terfered with. A great variety of circumstances are permitted to influence. This man joins a certain Congregation because it is fashionable; that one because it pleases his employer or patron; a third because he received some polite attentions from its minister; a fourth because it may extend his customers, and so on. A Congregation is better without such members. They, no doubt, count; and very probably they pay towards its support. But what are men worth who can be bought on such easy terms? They may come and occupy their pews of a Sunday, now and again. But though *in* the Congregation they are not *of* it. They are not united to it by any living bond. When fashion or gain draws, we do not readily, if ever, become a part of the real body; for its vitality does not flow freely through either silken or golden ligaments. Sympathy, living and active, must be the uniting bond; sympathy in sentiment, in aims, in efforts; and this to gain there must be no constraint: the union of the members must be voluntary, unforced,—those with common affinities being drawn together. Then the Congregation becomes a real living body, its members “members one of another,” having a kindly “care one for another.”

The Congregation is a society of *brethren* associated as equals. In the house of prayer, the distinction of high and low, rich and poor, should never be recognised. Differences of rank and position should be forgotten. The Congregation is a real democracy. The rights of its members are equal. The vote or voice of the humblest as potent as that of the richest. And yet it contains its aristocracy,—composed, not of the wealthiest and most powerful, but of the truest and the best—those wisest in counsel, warmest in sympathy, and readiest in effort. These, in whatever rank of life, the Congregation esteems and honours for their worth and works' sake. But while it gives honour to whom honour is due, it never forgets the fraternal relation which subsists between its members all; and takes good heed that none shall justly consider themselves neglected or uncared for.—How little, alas! of this spirit is to be found in our Congregations, generally. Who would pronounce their members a band of brothers? If a few of them happen to recognise each other, as they enter or retire from the church, how cold and formal the salutation! Observe the prim propriety with which the several families walk up the aisles, and take their places in their respective boxes,—the sexton opening and closing the doors for the wealthy and “respectable,” and as to the poor—they may attend themselves. As in America, a portion of the church is partitioned off, for the accommodation of worshippers “of colour,” so with us certain pews, labelled “free,” are set apart for the use of worshippers in corduroy and calico. Venture to enter a pew at random in any of our fashionable churches, and, if you don't find it locked, the chances are, you will be informed that “it is engaged!”—most certainly so, if you are in humble attire. Only a few weeks ago, I was informed by one of the most intelligent and respectable of our merchants, that, when in the metropolis, a short time before, he visited one of the Unitarian churches, and having

taken a seat in an empty pew, he immediately received a polite intimation that the strangers' pew was in another part of the church! And not long since, the readers of our denominational Publications must have been struck with the numerous communications they contained, complaining of the want of the commonest civility towards strangers on the part of Congregations;—and not alone towards strangers but even to their own members. One person had been a regular attendant at a church for years, and, during all that time, not a single member had interchanged a word with him! And this, with slight modifications, is the history of hundreds. Indeed, in every Congregation, it is more or less so. How reconcile this with the idea of a Christian brotherhood?—And, then, who are they to whom court and reverence are paid? Let it be known that a man of noble blood or high position is to honour the Congregation by his presence, and he is received with the politest attentions and conducted to the best seat. In the business-meetings of the members let but the rich man speak, and with what respect his words are heard. While, if, in opposition to him, the poor man give wise counsel, and his words be words of wisdom, he is little heeded. The favour of the man of influence must be retained. Though his counsel be folly, he must be humoured. Now, is there not too much of this in all Congregations?—subverting, to the degree in which it exists, the grand doctrine of the brotherhood and equality of the members of the Christian church. And, besides being unchristian, it is unwise and impolitic—it is suicidal. The poor will naturally lose confidence in any organization that despises men because they are poor; while the rich, if men of sense, will entertain but little love for any institution, which respects wealth more than worth in its members: though vanity may be flattered, common sense is disgusted by such partiality. The words of James, respecting the treatment of the poor and rich, should be engraven on all churches. Brethren, let not the conduct he condemns be chargeable against you. Respect no one for his wealth; despise no one for his poverty. Assume not authority one over another. Remember you are brethren,—“members one of another.” Let not cold formality separate you. Know each other. Close not your pew-doors on the stranger who comes for a time to worship with us,—however humble his garb. Take a kindly and affectionate interest in each other. Let no one wrap himself up in the cloak of selfishness, and, in his concern for himself, forget his neighbour. “We are members one of another.” Have, therefore, “the same care one for another.”

As to the *bond of union* in our Churches—What is it? What *should* it be? In most—indeed I may say all—the churches of Christendom, the condition of full membership is a concurrence, expressed or implied, in certain opinions that are considered of essential importance. Directly or indirectly, the candidate for admission is met by the query—Do you believe this? Do you believe that? His opinions, or rather his *professions* of opinions, are the all-important; and his character, his life, a secondary consideration. Give the churches a sound believer, or rather a good professor—one who will quietly

swallow their creeds—and for the rest—no matter! Almost as rational, in my mind, to make a certain stature and complexion, the standard, the test, of church-membership, as speculative opinions; and perhaps not less likely to secure an orthodox church. Admit no one who is not of a certain height, and his hair of a certain hue, and you will run as good a chance of collecting a truth-loving and virtue-practising Congregation, as by requiring assent to any speculative opinions, whether relating to godheads, divine essences, immaculate conceptions, or any of the kindred doctrines comprised in the creeds of the churches. Not concurrence in speculative opinion should be the bond of a church's union,—a common aim, a common purpose, should draw the members of a Christian church together. They unite to promote the culture of those natures God has given them, and to aid in awakening others to a like duty. Here, brethren, is a platform broad enough for all to meet upon, affording no pretext nor temptation to hypocrisy; and high enough to raise us above those sectarian animosities and narrow prejudices which creed-bound churches engender, and which in strife about useless forms retard the growth of religion in the heart. Yet not indifferent are the members of such a church respecting the interests of truth. They are rather truth's best friends. Wedded to no opinions, old or new, bound to swear in the words of no master, they meet a band of truth-seekers, anxious the truth to find and know. And all the more likely are such to find it, if faithful. What chance has truth to make its way among those leagued and banded together to maintain and defend, all their lives long, the stereotyped doctrines of a creed? Does any church foolishly suppose that it possesses all that may be known of God, of truth, of duty, so that it may close itself in from all further light, and bind itself ever to hold and advocate the opinions it inherited?

"But," it is asserted, "concurrence in certain leading doctrines is essential to the peace and prosperity of the church." Such a supposition is by no means complimentary to the enlightenment and Christian feeling of the members. Among semi-civilized or savage tribes such precaution might be necessary, in order to avoid unseemly contentions; but surely not among Protestant Christians, who, as Protestants allow the right of private judgment, and as Christians hold that the badge whereby they are known is their love one for another.

Concurrence in opinion is an insufficient, an unsound basis of union. It retards mental growth and human progress. An individual trained from childhood in the belief that all saving knowledge is contained in the creed of his church, and that anything opposed thereto or differing therefrom, is dangerous, if not damnable, is discouraged from inquiry, lest through "vain philosophy," or the "pride of the human heart," he might fall into error. In his own church he has all saving knowledge,—and what does he want more? And should he, through any influence, be induced to think for himself, and thereby be led to reject the doctrines of his creed, he is tempted to conceal his views, knowing that their avowal would be sure to entail alienations and estrangements,—if not worse; and, rather than undergo all this, he is

tempted to assume and wear the mask of hypocrisy. And, alas ! how many are there do so. Men who, traitors to conscience and to truth, with the multitude bend the knee to Baal, while in their hearts they despise him,—men who join in the services of churches whose creeds they disbelieve and their practices condemn. I hardly know which to condemn the more severely—the mean, cowardly, fashion-led creatures, that thus make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience ; or the churches, which, by requiring profession of certain opinions as the condition of membership, encourage, if not cause, such a deadly infidelity.

Again : unity of opinion is an impossible basis. Perfect agreement, on a variety of speculative subjects, is not attainable by any considerable number of persons. And when it is professed, I hesitate not to say that it is the unity either of mental death or of hypocrisy. If there be unity, it is the unity of unthinking minds who receive their opinions on trust, who allow themselves to be spoon-fed by their religious teachers, who unquestioningly receive their church's creed, and, being hers, would swear to it, if necessary. But, if they are men who think and judge for themselves, and yet profess to think all alike, to hold exactly the same opinions, I tell you, it is the profession of hypocrites.—The uniformity-of-opinion theory has been tried for centuries, and it will not work. Every sect in Christendom has attempted it and failed. Instead of producing real unity, it has caused new differences, and therewith new sects. And this is to be expected. As thinkers multiply, sects multiply ; and, if the course be persevered in, the result must be actual individualism in its worst form ;—each person isolated from every other,—his points of difference projecting like the quills of the porcupine, and preventing all intimate connexion or friendly coöperation with his neighbour. Not such an issue did Christianity contemplate, still less desire ; nor such a state of things does humanity require for the full culture of man's whole nature—for the faithful performance of life's sacred duties. This to accomplish demands the union of men all in a common affection, in a common interest, in united labours of usefulness and love ;—to secure which the uniting bond must be—not unity of opinion, but—unity of heart and of aim ; a common desire the truth to know, a common desire to aid and be aided in forming character—the soul's aspirations, the mind's thoughts, the whole life, in conformity with the will divine. And such, brethren, is ours.

We are leagued to crush no man's mind into the old rusty moulds left us by Calvin or Cranmer, Arius or Athanasius. We desire the full growth of every mind after no fashion but its own. Differences of opinion on matters of speculation, of course, there must be among us. But, united in heart and sympathy, we have nothing to fear from such differences. If true to our principles, we can "agree to differ" on points of speculation ; which, after all, are comparatively unimportant, producing little influence in the life. If the absence of difference of opinion indicates an unhealthy state of *mind*, a listlessness, lukewarmness, inactivity closely allied to death ; not a less unsound

state of *heart* is indicated when differences of sentiments excite unkindly feelings, or produce alienations and bitter contentions. Lay not yourselves open to the charge of bigotry and intolerance: they are the weak man's persecution; were he strong enough they would soon become fetters and dungeons. Be tolerant of each other. Magnify not differences when they arise; but view them in the light of brotherly affection and Christian feeling, and they fade out of sight.

Associated on these principles and with these views, it is clearly the duty of a Christian society, not alone to tolerate in its members the right of private judgment, and the necessary consequences of its exercise—differences in speculative opinions, but also, if need be, to protect them therein. A brother assailed, from whatever quarter, for his conscientious convictions, it is the bounden duty of the Congregation to protect,—be his opinions what they may. In throwing over him the shield of your protection, you by no means necessarily identify yourselves with his views: you merely do as you would be done unto: you protect him in the exercise of his rights. But this is a department of your duty on which I feel I have no need to dwell, as your recent conduct I interpret as an indication of your determination to defend and guard the sacred rights of conscience, whether assailed by friend or foe. The course you have chosen to adopt is to myself, personally, very gratifying. But I entreat you to consider the question, not in the light of personal friendship, but of duty. Let principle, and not partiality, influence you. Convinced that it is every man's right to think for himself and to judge for himself, and to be protected in its exercise, be prepared, on principle, to guard and defend each other's liberty, whenever or by whomsoever invaded. I want no sympathy nor protection for myself, you are not prepared to extend to the humblest member of our Congregation. Take your stand on true liberty of conscience: be firm and faithful; and your position is impregnable. Be manly and resolved, and though the storms of bigotry and unbrotherly hate may rage around, they are impotent to harm you. Efforts may be made to divide you, to draw you away from your present position. But I fear not the defection of a single person who is not prepared to write himself Papist. I am confident of the support of every genuine Protestant, whatever his creed. Our position is his. We stand for liberty of conscience, the right of private judgment, the duty of free inquiry,—not alone in theory but in practice. And as to any among you, if there be such, who are not prepared to allow and maintain these,—the sooner we are rid of them the better. It is time they had ceased to wear false colours, deceiving the public and perhaps themselves, by calling themselves Protestants, when their creed, their faith is the essence of the rankest Popery.

Touching the more practical duties of a Christian Congregation, our time will now allow us to say but little. That, however, we do not regret. Even the entire omission of this part of the subject would be of little consequence, as from the constitution of a Christian Congregation, as already explained, your judgments might easily supply the defect. In a few words, however, I shall endeavour to indicate them.

The temporal welfare of its members, especially of its poorer members, should seriously and constantly engage the attention of the Christian Congregation. It is readily seen how worldly competence is connected with moral culture. A hunger-whetted appetite, or a mind constantly strained on the rack of care, is by no means a good preparative for mental improvement, nor a strong incentive to moral and religious training. Convinced, at the same time, that it is the wisest charity which, instead of giving bread, provides the means of earning it, the Congregation should seek remunerative employment for those requiring it. And, witnessing the many evils that arise from improvidence, the industrious it should aid by counsel and otherwise, to attain independence through judicious economy and wise provision for the future. Here come into view the various societies which the Congregation should either supply within itself or be able to recommend, for improving the social condition of the humbler classes—the Employment Society,—the Savings' Bank,—the Sick Club,—the Building Association,—Deferred Annuity and Life Insurance Companies, &c. These or such other agencies as benevolence, under the guidance of wisdom, suggests, the Christian Congregation will diligently employ, for the social elevation of its poorer members.

But while it thus takes a deep interest in the temporal welfare of its members, the Christian Congregation will devote itself with earnest zeal to provide, above all things, for their mental, moral and religious improvement. Worldly abundance is a good thing; but not without these. In them, and not in the abundance of the things a man possesses, consists the kingdom of heaven. The promotion of these, therefore, will be the Congregation's chief aim. Apart from the helps the pulpit may render, there should be, for their promotion, the Mutual Improvement Societies, the carefully selected Library, the Social Reunions, the Sunday School, and such other Institutions as experience may approve for enlightening the minds, elevating the moral standard, cultivating the virtues, and promoting the moral and spiritual welfare of the members; and not the members alone but all on whom their influence may be usefully and judiciously brought to bear. And while this latter field is open to the Christian Congregation in every place, in large towns it becomes a serious and important concern. To the young especially, thousands of whom are growing up neglected and uncared for, their homes training them in all manner of iniquity—to these especial attention should be devoted in rescuing them from the evils by which they are surrounded.

Brethren, how discharge you these duties? What are you doing in these matters? What efforts are you making to promote your own and your brethren's improvement? Are you so united and so zealous in labours of usefulness as you might? It is not enough to show a solid front to oppression or persecution. Be united not alone, nor chiefly, by outward pressure but by inward attraction; and not more to resist aggression on your rights than to promote the principles you espouse—to realize them in your own lives and to aid others to realize them in theirs. "You are members one of another." "Have," therefore, "the same care one for another."

My friends, to-day is the first Sunday of a New Year. 1852 has opened upon us—a year that may very likely be eventful in Europe's history, in freedom's cause. In all probability, before its close, there may be a deadly struggle between liberty and despotism. Wise men consider the world's peace endangered. Upon the great Continent of the Old World, a thunder-cloud has been long gathering; and we know not the moment it may burst. When the crash comes, may the God of Justice give the victory to the right—may despotisms be crushed and the oppressed set free.

To yourselves, brethren, as a Congregation," the year we have entered upon, is not without its dangers and difficulties. You have been thrown upon your own resources. Those who projected the Congregation and called it into being, have deserted it;—and not only so, but, there is too good reason to believe, they look coldly upon it. You have to contend for existence, not only against the prejudices and the opposition of churches that have always considered it their duty to oppose us, but also against the coldness, if not the hostility, of former friends. To surmount your difficulties will demand the heartiest coöperation and most zealous efforts, and, at the same time, the wisest circumspection. Combine moderation with your zeal, courtesy with your firmness, gentleness with your perseverance. Let your lives be convincing advocates for your principles. Leave it in no man's power to say an unkind or ungenerous word of you. Show by your fruits, that whatever men call you, infidels or unbelievers, that the spirit of Christ reigns in your hearts and governs your conduct. Show by your love for each other, that Christianity supplies a closer and stronger bond of union than any doctrinal test. To hostile attacks be as adamant, off which the arrows of the foe shall rebound; while to each other, and all needing your sympathy and aid, be kind and condescending, gentle and tender-hearted. As Jesus exhorted the disciples—"Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

I entreat you, brethren, let the year we are entering on, be a year of united effort. Strengthen the bonds of your union by closer intimacy and cordial coöperation. With enlarged sympathies and enlarged Christian charity, let not trifles distract you. A serious responsibility is yours. The establishment of a Congregation, or the support of its Minister, is trifling in comparison. In fact, if we had fewer of both—fewer congregations and fewer ministers, and more real educators of the people, it were a blessing to society, to the world. I tell you then honestly that it is not because the existence of your Congregation has been endangered that I am so deeply concerned. Nor yet is it on account of my present means of support being imperilled; for though it would grieve me deeply to be separated from a Society from which I have experienced so much kind indulgence, and for many of whose members I cherish an undying friendship, yet in this wide world there is room enough for all, and work enough for all, and bread enough for all. I have no great fear for myself. But I shall tell you why I am so concerned. A great principle is at stake.

Through us the fundamental doctrine of Protestantism has been assailed. Our rights as Christians, as men—those noble principles which every genuine Protestant reveres and most dearly cherishes—liberty of conscience, free inquiry, the right of private judgment, have been invaded, by the representatives of the men who ever proved themselves their firmest advocates—have been set at naught and trampled upon by the very persons who have been constituted the guardians of the Rights of Conscience! Necessity has been laid upon you to protect these sacred rights from the assaults of their appointed guardians. That, with firm determination, you have undertaken to do, to the utmost of your power. And hence, my deep concern. My anxious wish, my heart's desire, is, that you should guard well your solemn trust, and show yourselves worthy of it. In the sacred name of Justice, of the Rights of Conscience, of the Truth we seek, and of the Religion we profess, I conjure you, in your efforts to defend your right to worship God and serve your fellow-man, according to the dictates of your consciences, "give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." Hinder not the cause you would help. Let a wise moderation, a generous forbearance, an untiring zeal, and, above all, blameless, pure, and useful lives, characterize you. This be your course, and the defence of the Rights of Conscience shall not have been committed to you in vain.

And, dear friends, may God bless you all. May the year we have commenced be to you all, a year of prosperity, of happiness, of much moral and religious growth. May you all enjoy the blessings of domestic peace, and of "consciences void of offence toward God and man." And when its days are numbered—and still more when life's hours are closing—oh! may we all now so live, true to conscience, to duty, and to God, that we shall then be enabled to look back on lives consecrated by purity, holiness, and virtue, and forward to the unknown future without fear, with strong hope and trust in Him who ever loves and blesses the faithful. Amen.

